

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-95 (Canceled).

96. (Currently amended): An optical coupling supporting at least an optical fiber in alignment with a connection device in an optoelectronic assembly, comprising:

an optical fiber;

a ferrule supporting one end of the optical fiber, said ferrule having a body comprising a first ferrule half and a second ferrule made of metal defining at least a bore for supporting an optical fiber, wherein the body is characterized by a metal structure that is formed by a stamping process; and

a sleeve sized and shaped to slidably receive the ferrule and extend beyond an end of the ferrule to couple to the connection device, so as to align the ferrule and the optical fiber supported by the ferrule relative to the connection device.

97. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the body of the ferrule has a cross-section that is generally uniform for an entire length of the body.

98. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 97, wherein the body of the ferrule has a cross-section that is generally at least one of circular, partially circular, rectangular, or loop.

99. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the body of the ferrule is generally cylindrical, and the sleeve has a body that is generally cylindrical.

100. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the body of the ferrule defines a plurality of bores for supporting a plurality of optical fibers.

101. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 96, further comprising a guide pin extending from the ferrule for alignment with the connection device.

102. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 101, wherein the ferrule comprises a bore for receiving the guide pin.

103. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the ferrule includes at least one of a groove and a protrusion on its external surface and the sleeve includes at least one of a complementary protrusion or groove.

104. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half are initially brought together and maintained in a mating relationship by the sleeve.

105. (Canceled)

106. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 104, wherein the first ferrule half has a structure that is substantially similar to that of the second ferrule half, each provided with at least a groove, which together define the bore for supporting the optical fiber.

107. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 104, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half support the optical fiber with the end of the optical fiber flush against an end face of the ferrule.

108. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 107, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half are both stamped simultaneously.

109. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 107, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half are both stamped from a single work piece.

110. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 109, wherein the single work piece is in sheet form.

111. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 109, wherein the body of the ferrule is formed by stamping and attaching two ends of the single work piece representing the first ferrule half and second ferrule half.

112. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 111, wherein the two ends are attached by welding.

113. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 104, wherein the first ferrule half has a first surface and the second ferrule half has a second surface, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half are assembled together at the first and second surfaces, and wherein the first ferrule half is attached to the second ferrule half by at least one of welding and an adhesive material provided at the edge of the first and second surfaces.

114. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 113, wherein a notch is provided at the edge of each of the first and second surfaces, and wherein the first ferrule half is attached to the second ferrule half by at least one of welding and an adhesive provided at the notches.

115. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 106, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half are each provided with a plurality of matching grooves.

116. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 115, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half are connected at an edge.

117. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 116, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half have a connected body structure that is characterized by U-shaped loop formed by looping from a generally flat material in a stamping process, having two long sections joined by a short section.

118. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 117, wherein each of the long sections defines a plurality of grooves for supporting optical fibers.

119. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the body of the ferrule has a periphery defining at least two distinct contact surfaces, and wherein the sleeve is sized and shaped to contact the contact surfaces on said periphery, biasing contact pressure towards the contact surfaces.

120. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 119, wherein the body of the ferrule has a generally star-shaped cross-section, defining the at least two contact surfaces against the sleeve.

121. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 120, wherein the star-shaped cross-section is characterized by a loop formed by looping from a generally flat material in a stamping process.

122. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in 121, wherein the ferrule comprises a unitary body.

123. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 119, wherein the body of the ferrule has a generally U-shaped cross-section, comprising two long sections joined by a short section, wherein the long sections each defines the at least two contact surfaces against the sleeve.

124. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 123, wherein each of the long sections define a plurality of grooves for supporting optical fibers.

125. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 119, wherein the body of the ferrule comprises two half ferrules, each having a body characterized by a loop formed by looping from a generally flat material in a stamping process, and wherein the body of at least one of the two half ferrules has a split along an axial direction, thereby defining at least two distinct contact surfaces against the sleeve.

126. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the ferrule comprises a strength member extending from the body of the ferrule, which supports a section of the fiber not received in the bore of the body.

127. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the connection device comprises a complementary ferrule having a body defining at least a bore for supporting another optical fiber.

128. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 127, wherein the complementary ferrule of the connection device has a structure that is substantially similar to that of the ferrule, such that the sleeve couples and aligns the ferrule and the complementary ferrule, and the optical fibers supported thereby.

129. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 96, further comprising a plurality of ferrules, each supporting an optical fiber, wherein the sleeve is sized and shaped to receive the plurality of ferrules.

130. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 104, wherein the first ferrule half and the second ferrule half each has a hollow body structure facing each other.

131. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 96, wherein the sleeve is made of metal, and is characterized by a structure that is formed by a stamping process.

132. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 131, wherein the sleeve has a cross-section that is characterized by a loop formed by stamping from a generally flat material.

133. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 132, wherein the sleeve has a structure that includes a split along an axial direction.

134. (Previously presented): The optical coupling as in claim 131, wherein the sleeve has a cross-section that is generally uniform.

135. (Withdrawn): The optical coupling as in claim 131, wherein the sleeve has an end that extends beyond the ferrule, and wherein said end couples to the connection device.

136. (Currently amended): A connector for connecting first and second optical fibers in an optoelectronic assembly, comprising:

a first ferrule having a metal body supporting the first optical fiber, wherein the metal body of the first ferrule is characterized by a structure comprising a first ferrule half and a second ferrule half that are shaped by a stamping process;

a second ferrule having a metal body supporting the second optical fiber;

a common sleeve sized and shaped to receive the first ferrule and the second ferrule and extend from the first ferrule and the second ferrule to maintain the first ferrule and the second ferrule in an end-to-end manner, so as to align the first ferrule relative to the second ferrule, and the first optical fiber relative to the second optical fiber.

137. (Currently amended): The connector as in claim 136, wherein ~~at least one of the first and second ferrules~~ comprises ~~first and second~~ a third and a fourth half ferrules that together define a bore sized and shaped to receive respective one of the first and second optical fibers.

138. (Currently amended): The connector as in claim 136, wherein the common sleeve has a first end receiving the first ferrule, ~~an~~ and a second end receiving the second ferrule.

139. (Currently amended): A connector for coupling two optical fibers in an optoelectronic assembly, comprising:

a first component configured to support a first optical fiber, comprising a first body defining a first bore for supporting the first optical fiber, wherein the first body is characterized by a first structure comprising a first ferrule half and a second ferrule half that are shaped by a stamping process;

a second component configured to support a second optical fiber, comprising a second body defining a second bore for supporting the second optical fiber, wherein the second body is characterized by a second structure that is shaped by a stamping process; and

a third component configured to couple to external surfaces of and extending between the first component and the second component to maintain the first component and the second component in an end-to-end manner to axially align the first component and the second component, so that the first optical fiber is aligned with the second optical fiber, wherein the third component is characterized by a third structure that is shaped by a stamping process.

140. (Currently amended): A process for producing an optical coupling for supporting at least one optical fiber in alignment with a connection device in an optoelectronic assembly, comprising the steps of:

stamping a metal body comprising a first ferrule half and a second ferrule half to form a ferrule defining at least a bore for supporting an optical fiber; and

forming a sleeve sized and shaped to slidably receive the ferrule and to extend beyond an end of the ferrule to couple to the connection device, to align the ferrule and the optical fiber that is supported by the ferrule relative to the connection device.

141. (Previously presented): The process of claim 140, wherein the sleeve is made of metal, and wherein the forming step comprises the step of stamping a metal body to form the sleeve.

142. (Currently amended): An optical coupling for supporting at least an optical fiber in alignment with a connection device in an optoelectronic assembly, comprising:

a ferrule having a body made of metal, wherein the body comprises a first ferrule half and second ferrule half defining a bore for supporting an optical fiber; and

a sleeve sized and shaped to receive the ferrule and to extend beyond an end of the ferrule to couple to the connection device, so as to align the ferrule and the optical fiber supported by the ferrule relative to the connection device.

143. (Currently amended): An optical coupling for supporting at least an optical fiber in alignment with a connection device in an optoelectronic assembly, comprising:

a ferrule having a body defining at least a bore for supporting an optical fiber, the body characterized by a metal structure comprising a first ferrule half and a second ferrule half that are formed by a stamping process;

an optical fiber supported by the body; and

a sleeve coupled to the ferrule and extending beyond an end of the ferrule, and sized and shaped to connect to the connection device, so as to align the ferrule and the optical fiber supported by the body relative to the connection device.

144. (Previously presented): A connector coupling two optical fibers in an optoelectronic assembly, comprising:

a first component comprising a first body defining at least a bore supporting a first optical fiber, wherein the first body is characterized by a metal structure comprising a first ferrule half and a second ferrule half that are shaped by a stamping process; and

a second component comprising a second body supporting a second optical fiber, wherein the first body and the second body are axially aligned end-to-end, so that the first optical fiber is axially aligned with the second optical fiber.

145. (Previously presented): The connector as in claim 144, wherein the first component further comprising a third body sized and shaped to receive the second body.